Impact case study (REF3)

REF2021

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University

Unit of Assessment: UoA21 Sociology

Title of case study: Improved registered sex offender management in England and Wales

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2015 – 2019

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):**	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:**
Dr Samantha Lundrigan	Director of the Policing Institute for the Eastern Region (PIER)	2009– present
Dr Natalie Mann	Senior Research Fellow	2011 – present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018 – December 2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No

1. Summary of the impact

Research conducted by Dr Lundrigan and Dr Mann from 2015 to 2019 investigating the effectiveness of current registered sex offender (RSO) community management resulted in key changes to policy and practice in all 43 (100%) police forces and all seven (100%) divisions of the National Probation Service (NPS) in England and Wales.

Impact arising directly from this research includes:
- From April 2020 national changes to the NPS sex offender risk assessment policy and the implementation of a new NPS risk management tool used to manage the approximately 26,000 RSOs within the NPS across England and Wales. This has led to increased efficiency for front-line probation practitioners and savings of approximately £1.22million per year for the NPS.
- From December 2019 national changes to Active Risk Management System (ARMS) training for sex offender management officers in all 43 police forces (100%) and seven NPS divisions (100%).
- Strengthened sex offender management networks leading to improvements in information sharing and collaboration on cases between police and probation practitioners.

2. Underpinning research

Within England and Wales there are 62,435 RSOs. These individuals are managed by specialist police teams and the NPS (Ministry of Justice, 2018). From 2015 to 2019, Lundrigan and Mann conducted two research projects examining the effectiveness of risk management practices for RSOs in the community, including the first national evaluation of the Active Risk Management System (ARMS). ARMS was introduced in England and Wales in 2014 as a national standard for the risk assessment and management planning of sexual offenders (College of Policing, 2014).

In 2015–2016 Mann conducted a qualitative research project involving extensive fieldwork with Essex Police public protection teams on the impact of ARMS on police and probation staff workload, and on the relationship between RSOs and their monitoring officers [a] [b]. The research identified that reduced resources, arising from austerity measures, had negatively impacted police sex-offender management, hindered collaboration between police and probation officers and ultimately had a detrimental effect on the police's ability to protect the public. Importantly, the newly implemented and highly resource-intensive ARMS was placing an additional time and resource burden on police officers, amplifying the impacts of austerity [a] [b].

Through this work and connections established with senior officials in the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), the Home Office, and Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS), Mann and Lundrigan were invited to evaluate the ARMS tool.

The first national evaluation of ARMS
Between 2017 and 2019, Lundrigan and Mann conducted the first national evaluation of ARMS, the objective of which was to provide criminal justice decision-makers with the evidence base to inform the future direction and development of the ARMS tool. This was achieved through a programme of mixed-methods research (interviews, focus groups, observations, and inter-rater reliability exercises) that engaged all 43 police forces (100%) and all seven NPS regions (100%) in England and Wales. Funding for the two-year project worth £196,000 was secured from the Dawes Trust [c].

Main findings:
- ARMS was well embedded across all 43 police forces in England and Wales. The adoption of ARMS into the National Probation Service (NPS) had been less successful. Differences in the approach taken to risk management by police and the NPS had led to discrepancies in how the ARMS tool was both used and perceived. Rather than encouraging collaboration, the joint use of ARMS served to highlight the differences between the agencies and their role in managing offenders.
- Evidence suggested that a divide existed between police practitioners, for whom the tool was well embedded into practice and a standardised approach to RSO management, and NPS practitioners, for whom ARMS was a duplication of the NPS Offender Assessment System (OASys). As such, information sharing and cooperation between police and the NPS was variable, undermining the very purpose of ARMS as a joint-agency tool.
- Several limitations were identified in the delivery of ARMS training for police and probation officers. Single agency training had contributed to variable practices and a lack of joint agency working. NPS practitioners stated that the purpose of ARMS as a joint agency tool and the value of the tool for the NPS was not communicated during initial ARMS training. There was also a need among police officers for regular and updated training, to supplement their initial training and communicate any changes in practice.
- A number of risk factors were identified as difficult to rate for practitioners, as well as groups of individuals who were challenging to assess (e.g. RSOs with mental health issues, learning difficulties, or who were trans-gender). Practitioners felt the case studies used in training did not represent the variety of offender types they are required to manage.
- The comprehensiveness of ARMS, designed to enhance the effectiveness of the tool, had made it time-intensive to utilise. As such, increasing workloads and decreasing resources had resulted in the dilution of the intended ARMS practice and thus its overall effectiveness [d].

The final report from the national ARMS evaluation put forward 17 recommendations arising from the research [d]. Ten of these recommendations were subsequently implemented by police and/or the NPS, resulting in changes to national policy and practice for ARMS practitioners, particularly in relation to the development of the new ARMS-informed OASys tool, and changes to national ARMS training practices.

3. References to the research

[a] Mann, N., Devendran, P., & Lundrigan, S. (2018). Policing in a Time of Austerity: Understanding the Public Protection Paradox through Qualitative Interviews with Police Monitoring Officers, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice,* 14 (3)*,* pp. 630-642, https://doi.org/10.1093/police/pay047. Peer-reviewed; in REF 2 (reserve).
[b] Mann, N., Devendran, P., & Lundrigan, S. (2019). 'You're never really free': Understanding the barriers to desistance for Registered Sex Offenders in the community, *Journal of*

Criminology and Criminal Justice, June, pp. 1-18,
https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1748895819853861 Peer-reviewed; in REF 2.
[c] Grants associated with the research. **Lundrigan, S.,** & **Mann, N.** 2017–2019. An Evidence-Based Approach to the Risk Management of Registered Sex Offenders in England and Wales, The Dawes Trust, £196,000. Competitive, peer-reviewed funded project. Output **[d]** from this grant.
[d] Mann, N. & Lundrigan, S. (2020). A National Evaluation of the Active Risk Management System: Final report. https://aru.ac.uk/policing-institute/pier-research/national-arms-evaluation

4. Details of the impact

The research conducted by Lundrigan and Mann has led directly to changes in policy at a national level and positive impacts on the day-to-day practice of offender managers across England and Wales. An ARMS Task and Finish Group was established with the explicit aim of driving the rapid translation of the research into changes in policy and practice through regular reports of evaluation findings. This led to four main areas of impact.

Development of a new ARMS-informed OASys (AiO) assessment for the National Probation Service (NPS)
One of the key recommendations of the national evaluation was that: *consideration should be given as to whether ARMS remains the most effective tool for NPS use.* This recommendation was "an important factor in the decision to change the use of ARMS in the NPS" (HMPPS Head of Assessment and Management of the Sex Offending Policy team) [S1]. The research found that current policy requiring probation officers to complete both an ARMS and a probation specific (OASys) risk assessment was significantly increasing the workload of probation officers through the duplication of risk assessment information. As a result of these findings, the NPS developed a new risk management tool, the ARMS-informed OASys (AiO). The new digitalised AiO tool became fully operational in July 2020 and is currently being used by probation officers in all seven divisions of the NPS [S2]. This has involved designing and delivering new AiO training, which has been completed by 766 probation officers (Personal communication with Development Manager of HMPPS, November 2020).

A questionnaire on the impact of these changes was sent out to 64 members of the NPS. The six NPS staff (5 senior staff, 1 front-line probation officer; 9% response rate) who responded, all strongly agreed that this change would save time for probation officers, would lead to more efficient working practices and would enhance public protection [S3]. The HMPPS Head of Assessment and Management of the Sex Offending Policy team, commented that there is "undoubtedly some time savings being made from practitioners not completing the two assessments separately and, therefore, avoiding duplication" and that the new AiO will "strengthen the routine sharing of assessments with the police" [S1].

The development of the AiO means that NPS officers no longer need to complete an additional ARMS assessment for RSOs managed in the community. This has led to substantial resource savings across England and Wales, in NPS practitioner time saved, and increased efficiency. NPS officers were originally allocated 3 hours to conduct an ARMS assessment per RSO (at least once per year), however the national ARMS evaluation found that an ARMS assessment could take up to 6-8 hours to complete. Reducing this time by at least 3 hours for 26,405 RSOs, results in approximately £1.22m per year saved for the NPS (calculated using the average salary of a probation officer; National Careers Service, 2020). The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) and Chief Constable of Cumbria Police stated that "the legacy of this research will be greater effectiveness in the risk management of sexual offenders and thus the protection of the public" [S4]. The Ministry of Justice Lead for Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) reiterated that the "impact of the national ARMS evaluation research goes beyond the use of the tool itself and into the wider arena of public protection… the subsequent learning as a result of the ARMS research, will hopefully strengthen the management of sexual offenders which in turn will improve the protection of the public from sexual re-offending" [S5].

Improvements to national training for ARMS practitioners
The research identified several gaps in ARMS training delivery as well as a lack of joint agency working, arising from an historical lack of collaboration between the police and probation services. The research recommended that this be addressed through new ARMS training practices. As a result, widespread changes have been made to national ARMS training for police and probation officers across all 43 police forces and 7 NPS regions in England and Wales, including:

- Initial ARMS training for all new police and probation officers delivered as a single training package (previously two different packages), delivered jointly (previously delivered to police and probation separately).
- In December 2019, annual ARMS refresher training for all ARMS force trainers was introduced for the first time. Prior to the research, practitioners only received initial training, and there were no opportunities to receive updates or information on best practice.
- New ARMS training materials have been developed to reflect the findings of the research and the gaps in training identified by the participants. These include the development of a new case study, which contains examples of risk factors identified as difficult to rate (i.e. sexual preoccupation, offence-related sexual interests, emotional intimacy and emotional congruence) and examples of individuals who may be challenging to assess (e.g. hostile, learning difficulties).
- NPS training in relation to the new AiO tool now includes a half-day of training with the local police offender-management team on the role of each agency in ARMS practice and to "promote strong working relationships and information sharing arrangements within the local context" [S5].

These changes have led to improved joint agency working between police and probation services and had positive impacts on practitioners' day-to-day practice. A questionnaire was sent to over 163 police practitioners and senior staff across England and Wales (18 responses; 11% response rate). One respondent commented that "joint training will enable joint discussions around expectations and reality for both agencies" and another that ''patterns and trends of offending are always evolving. It is important that this is reflected in the current training… More up to date material will give newly appointed staff a better insight into what they potentially will be faced with" [S3].

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the largest force in the country with the greatest number of ARMS practitioners (230), delivered their first ARMS refresher training to over 50 practitioners in August 2020. MPS ARMS trainers, who designed the training with input from Lundrigan and Mann, highlighted that "the research has been invaluable to the timely re-design and delivery of ARMS training for the Metropolitan Police" [S6]. Attendees from the MPS refresher training commented that "the material covered was very helpful. It filled gaps and expanded on the original training" and another noted that "this refresher training will enhance and change my day to day working. The ARMS [assessment] will be more comprehensive" [S7]. 83% of the attendees from the MPS refresher training (of 6 questionnaire respondents) felt that refresher training was important or very important [S7].

Strengthened sex offender management networks and facilitation of best practice sharing
The research identified a lack of best practice sharing and knowledge exchange among offender managers across England and Wales. In response to this, Lundrigan and Mann developed and delivered five events to disseminate interim findings from the national ARMS evaluation, share best practice on sex-offender management and create resilient offender-management networks.

In November 2017 and May 2019, Lundrigan and Mann co-hosted two national conferences with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) which together were attended by 400 delegates from public protection units, government, charities, and academia across the United Kingdom [S8]. Feedback from 41 respondents (10.3% response rate) found that 100% agreed (43.9%) or strongly agreed (56.1%) that the conference would impact positively on their practice. Many respondents commented that the conferences were highly informative and relevant, and

highlighted the benefits of sharing knowledge with other practitioners, for example one stated that as a result of the conference "*several contacts [were] made which will allow us to take best practice back to* [*our*] *local police force*" [S9]. Lundrigan and Mann also delivered practitioner focused workshops in June 2018, December 2019 and January 2020 for public protection officers attended by 237 practitioners. The December 2019 and January 2020 workshops were attended by 69 practitioners from 21 different police forces and criminal justice agencies, including the Home Office and National Crime Agency (June 2018 attendance not available). Feedback from 60 respondents (87% response rate) found that 100% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the workshop would impact positively on their practice [S9]. The NPCC Lead for Public Protection, sharing an example of this, explained that during the June 2018 workshop, a police practitioner in attendance discussed a high-risk offender who was committing contact sexual abuse against a child. The information and advice gained from the workshop and subsequent discussion led to the successful identification and arrest of the offender. The presenting officer stated that he "*had no doubt that this child would have been subjected to further significant abuse had we not discussed the case at the seminar*" [S8]. As such, these events have resulted in the sharing of best practice and collaboration between agencies.

The NPCC Lead for Public Protection further remarked that, these events have "allowed us to develop a unique 'environment' where police and other criminal justice practitioners, both from national and international jurisdictions, can, for the first time, come together to discuss complex cases, share best practice and learn about innovative techniques. Within the area of public protection, where joint agency collaboration and information sharing are essential, being able to access such an innovative 'environment' has been instrumental in creating strong networks of practitioners and ultimately contributing to a more effective public protection sector in England and Wales as a whole" [S8].

In November 2020, as a result of the research conducted in the field of sex offender management, Lundrigan was awarded £860,000 by The Dawes Trust to deliver a programme of applied research in the investigation and prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSAE). In collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, charities/third sector and technology partners, this funding will enable the development and delivery of a research and innovation strategy which addresses significant gaps in the understanding of CSAE and the operational needs to investigate and prevent it. The funding includes the appointment of two Senior Dawes Research Fellows to Anglia Ruskin University for a period of four years and the creation of eight ARU/Dawes match-funded PhD studentships [S10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[S1] Testimonial letter from HMPPS Head of Assessment and Management of Sex Offender Policy.
[S2] National Probation Service Use of ARMS Briefing Document April 2020.
[S3] Questionnaire findings for police and probation practitioners.
[S4] Testimonial letter from NPCC Lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders (MOSOVO) and Chief Constable of Cumbria Police.
[S5] Testimonial letter from the Ministry of Justice Lead for Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).
[S6] Testimonial letter from ARMS trainers from the Metropolitan Police Service.
[S7] Questionnaire findings from Metropolitan Police Service officers.
[S8] Testimonial letter from NPCC Lead for Public Protection and Chief Constable of Norfolk Constabulary.
[S9] Conference feedback from PIER Conference 2019. PIER Practitioner Workshop feedback results, December 2019, January 2020.
[S10] Dawes Trust Grant Letter of Confirmation, November 2020.